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Amendments to the Abstract

A wine barrel having a rigid external reusable frame with replaceable wooden side panels and substantially identical upper and lower wooden ends assembled within the rigid external frame ~~connecting bars~~ to provide a wooden enclosure for the wine. A liquid tight container is provided; the wine exposed only to wooden surfaces ~~or materials non-reactive to wine~~. Panels can be replaced in the frame with new panels or existing panels having an unused side can be removed, reversed, and reused. Assembly of the barrel is straightforward requiring only minimum tools and skills without the need for the hand-fitting expertise required in constructing a traditional barrel. When assembled, the rigid frame, and not the wood panels, supports all the external and internal loads of the wine barrel. For introduction of a caramel taste to the wine the wood panels can be initially placed in an oven with the degree of caramelization controlled by the oven temperature and exposure time.